

Hallam Profile

Hallam is located about 15 miles southwest of Lincoln near the Gage County line. Primary access is from State Spur 55H (Hallam Road) from the east and W. Hallam Road from the west. Hallam sits near the highest point of the County with the northern side draining into Salt Creek and the south side draining into the Lower Big Blue River basin. Hallam is generally flat and has no floodplain. This part of Lancaster County has generally good groundwater supply and most of the land is in row crops with much of it irrigated.

Hallam is one of the smaller towns in the County and has actually seen a reduction in population since the 2000 census. This reduction is due primarily to a massive tornado that destroyed most of the community in 2004. Many houses and businesses have been reconstructed since then but the population has rebounded to only about 80% of what it was prior to the storm. Many residents have strong ties to the town and one another because of the shared experience of recovery. Newcomers also are conscious of the town's recent past. Because so many of the dwellings and other buildings have been reconstructed the town includes newer homes and a more unified aesthetic than many other towns in the County. Other unique attributes of the County include Chanticleer pear trees lining the main residential entry from the east and a heart on the water tower (Hallam's motto is "The Little Town with a Big Heart"). The location of Hallam equidistance from Lincoln, Crete and Beatrice makes it an ideal location for couples who work in different towns. Hallam sits at the highest elevation in the County which has recently drawn the attention of wind developers.

Hallam has no trouble recruiting volunteers for specific events like street dances, fund raisers, and clean up days. However, it is more difficult to fill positions on permanent committees and boards and many of those positions are filled by a small group of people. While many small towns have a majority of residents that have a long family history of living there, Hallam has more "new" residents than most and it can be challenging to engage these newcomers.

Hallam has a Comprehensive Plan that underwent a major update in 2011. The update included community participation and was done entirely by the community with no consultant input. The survey done for that update was recently repeated and has yielded some interesting ideas, including the need for attention to a few basements that remain open after the tornado, difficulty with speeding traffic through the center of town, lack of available housing and housing for the elderly, importance of trees and sidewalks to neighborhoods, interest in gaining more business and industry in the village, and a willingness to increase tax spending to remove community eyesores.

Hallam, of course, saw a lot of residential and commercial development immediately after the tornado as dwellings and businesses were replaced. They are proud of the fact that all of the pre-tornado businesses returned afterwards, and one new business, a bottling plant for Prairieland Dairy, came to town. Residential rebuilding did not bring back the same number of dwellings as several owners combined adjacent lots in order to have more "elbow room" when rebuilding. Properties on the edge of the village are in farm use and there is at least a perception that the owners of those properties have no intentions of developing them, so most feel residential development is somewhat limited. There is a former tavern that was recently foreclosed upon and several lots owned by the same person that are moving toward foreclosure as well. Two open basements have recently received permits for building.

Challenges to Hallam include traffic issues and continuing problems with water quality. There are a few streets that have not yet been paved and street lighting around town is spotty. Hallam would like to see the population

rebound to pre-tornado levels or better. Hallam is also concerned about possible future wind development in that part of the County.

GOALS:

1. Street improvement including even street lighting, additional traffic calming, and paving of remaining 2.5 blocks of gravel roadway. Some (lighting and signs) could be short term, others (paving and other calming) could be longer term.
2. Hallam would like to attract additional residents and get houses on remaining vacant lots (long term).
3. Make improvements to downtown streetscapes and other improvements or techniques for attracting business and industry to downtown. (long term)